



Framing a theory-grounded research agenda related to student outcomes

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Summary

This symposium is one of five sessions in a series on framing a research agenda in multiple arenas: students, faculty, institutions, communities, and partnerships. Drawing on *Research on Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment* (Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, in press), we will discuss theories relevant to research related to student outcomes (specifically, cognition, academic

learning, and personal development), critique previous research in this arena, and collaboratively generate recommendations for practice and future research.

We will open the session by inviting collaborative critique of research related to students. We will share a model for conceptualizing research in terms of the convergence of theory, design, practice, and measurement (Bringle, Clayton, & Hatcher, in press) and use it to frame the discussion.

Peggy Fitch will focus on theory and research related to the application of intellectual development (Steinke & Fitch, 2003) and critical thinking (Fascione, 1990; Paul & Elder, 2008) to service-learning course design focused on enhancing cognitive outcomes (Novak, Markey, and Allen, 2007). Intellectual development, critical thinking, metacognition, problem solving, and transfer are all essential components of self-regulated learning that lasts beyond college and that undergirds effective engagement with communities. A research agenda related to cognitive outcomes will be outlined.

Patti Clayton will share a conceptual framework for articulating, assessing, and investigating academic learning outcomes of service learning. This framework is distilled from a set of related theoretical perspectives that speak to the nature of experiential learning and of cognitive processes more generally (e.g., Bloom, 1956; Paul & Elder, 2006). The discussion will emphasize the particular utility of service-learning in facilitating learning beyond basic foundational knowledge and skills and at the curricular level. A research agenda related to academic learning will be outlined.

Jay Brandenberger suggests that personal development is more often assumed to occur than explicitly targeted within curriculum development and that we need to ask whether the student growth we expect to occur through service learning is consistent with what is known about human development. He will bring theories related to positive psychology, psychosocial and identity development, and moral development to bear in discussion of inquiry into the personal development outcomes of service learning. A research agenda related to students' personal development will be outlined.

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